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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0039
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7009
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 000232

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2013
TAGS: [PREL](#) [BE](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BELGIAN FM PLANNING MARCH 2 TRIP TO BAGHDAD

Classified By: Political Counselor Theodore H Andrews, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) Action request -- see paragraph three.

12. (C) Belgian FM Karel De Gucht is planning to a one day visit to Baghdad on March 2, according to senior members of his staff. The MFA expects to announce this information itself shortly before the Minister's trip, thereby short circuiting at least some of the anticipated protest from the Opposition benches in Parliament. De Gucht wants to observe the current situation for himself, make contacts with the Iraqi government and, as his Chief of Staff put it, "bring the situation home to the Iraqi people." To that end, he expects to travel with a number of journalists. The DCM promised De Gucht's staff that we (i.e., Embassy Brussels) would do all possible to facilitate the trip.

13. (C) Action request: Please advise on how the Belgians can receive clearance for a Belgian government-owned aircraft to land in Baghdad early on March 2 and depart later the same day. De Gucht would arrive from Amman, where he intends to arrive on March 1. The Belgians told us they expect to use a British security firm called CRG for their security in the region. The Belgian Embassy in Amman is handling logistics for the visit.

14. (C) Comment: This action follows many years of lobbying. Following the recent announcement of plans to send additional forces to Afghanistan, it provides another indication that the Belgians have decided to return their foreign policy toward the path it followed during the years after World War Two. Fox
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